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*THE DIVINE REVELATION AND THE CHRISTIAN
RELIGION*¹

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With the dawn of the modern era there came a new interest in nature and the human mind. There was a withdrawal of attention from the supernatural to the natural, from the eternal to the temporal, from the divine to the human. This world with its interests came to its own. The secrets of nature were studied; its facts gathered; its laws formulated; its powers utilized; and its beauties appreciated. And the greater secrets of the human mind, too, were eagerly studied. The ideas of the mind were examined to discover whether they were innate or acquired; the relation of the data of the senses to the structure and the function of the mind was noted that the rise of knowledge might be learned; the legitimacy of the use of the categories of thought to interpret nature and the validity of our knowledge was called in question; and aspects of experience and powers of mind other than the distinctively rational came in for new appraisal.

The effects of this new study of nature and mind are seen in the practical concerns of daily life, in the world's commercial interests, in the political formulations of new states, and in the greater cultural values, like art, philosophy, religion, and theology. Many theologians began to find new arguments for the existence of God in the structure and the processes of nature, and to turn this new knowledge to religious and theological uses. They subsumed this new natural religion under revealed religion and, indeed, practically identified the two. Other thinkers, however,

¹ The Dudleian Lecture, delivered at Harvard University, May 2, 1912, on the following subject, prescribed by the founder, Paul Dudley, in 1750:

"The confirmation, illustration, and improvement of the great articles of the Christian Religion properly so called, or the revelation which Jesus Christ the son of God was pleased to make, first by himself, and afterwards by his holy Apostles, to his church and the world for their salvation."

reversed this order of natural and revealed religion. The one group levelled up natural religion, the other levelled down revealed religion. In the one as in the other the identification was practically complete; the only difference was the plane on which it was made.

Soon, however, came a separation of the two and their opposition. Some found in nature and in the human mind and the ordinary experiences of life the adequate sources and content of religion. They felt no necessity for recourse to a supernatural revelation. On the other hand, the apologists of revealed religion began to discredit the power of reason and to cast doubt upon the truth of its deliverances, to point out its failures and to explain them by its corruption through sin. Revelation, it was held, was thus seen to be necessary, and it was conceived as supernatural in its source and miraculous in its method. It required, and received, external attestation through miracle and prophecy. The apologists thus entered into the two spheres in which scientific thought and philosophic interest were most keen. They contended for the intervention of God in the natural order by miraculous events and in the psychological realm by miraculous predictions. Not the intrinsic character of revelation, but its external and miraculous evidences, engaged their attention.

Then came Hume upon the scene and did his destructive work. He undermined the presuppositions of those who based all upon natural theology by calling into question the legitimacy of the use of the causal principle and the validity of our knowledge, and left men only with *beliefs*. And, on the other hand, he undermined the position of the apologists by opposing to their claim of miracle the experience of the orderliness of the world. The sceptic had done his work; he had served his day and generation. After the destroyer came Kant, the reconstructor, whose aim was to reinstate the mind and the world in a vital relation, by way of knowledge on the level of sense, and of faith on the plane of moral experience. The task of building the world anew in our bosoms was thus given.

As one looks over this phase of thought, which we have rapidly sketched, and tries to estimate its value, he notes that beneath all the superficial reasonings and inconclusive arguments there

was a deep undercurrent of experience. In the Reformation there was a return from the church to something more fundamental in life,—to the religious experience of the soul which men found in the Bible; and in the Renaissance there was a movement of the mind from things established and written to life in its contact with the world and experience in society. The desire was for fresh experience and first-hand contact with the world and the sense of living.

In this inner sphere of experience there are many elements, or aspects. The religious element is there as well as those elements which come from contact with the world and general human life. What estimate is to be placed upon these several aspects of experience? How shall this total experience be systematized? This is the problem which confronted both the rationalists and the apologists, and it remains with us still. Their efforts at the solution of the problem no longer satisfy us. The apologists in their efforts at solution depreciated too much the value of the experience derived from contact with the natural order, degraded the reason of man as the organ of knowledge, sought external supports for revelation in miracle and prediction, and identified revelation with the total contents of the Bible; and they also failed to make the revelation of God in the orderly processes of nature and the moral experiences of the soul and the historic career of the race, the fundamental basis of religion. The mistakes of the apologists are now perfectly plain to us.

Now on the other hand there is a growing sense of our debt to the rationalists, for never more than at present has there been such an appreciation of the experience that underlies the conception of natural religion. It is the finding of something worth worshipping in and through the natural order and the ordinary experiences of our common life. This discovery is revelation, and it makes for religion. This is the truth in their contention, and it has rendered us much service in our thought of the meaning of revelation. It has tended to make the idea of revelation natural, normal, and native, whereas apart from this influence the tendency was, and still is, to regard revelation as miraculous, abnormal, and alien, or at best as something given *ab extra* of which there is no reasonable explanation or justification.

This grounding of revelation in the natural order and in the nature of the soul is a contribution of permanent value.

Nevertheless the inadequacy of the rationalistic interpretation of religion is now deeply felt. It conceives the object of religion (that is, God) in far too static a fashion to give us a true understanding of the divine nature or to satisfy the demands of religion. God stands in the shadow and waits there to be discovered. Religion is primarily man's search for God and discovery of him rather than God's seeking and finding man. Still further, rationalism is too intellectualistic, for it regards the intellect as the supreme or the sole organ of knowledge. Then, too, it gives us an insufficient content. It takes the common elements of all religions rather than the distinctive elements of the highest religion. It takes what men in any age or place are supposed to have discovered and constitutes these the essential elements in religion. The richest and most significant content of life which the race possesses is not used for its interpretation of God or of man's life in the world. This procedure is at once unhistoric and unphilosophic. No one would think of giving an adequate interpretation of art in the terms of the common art-products and ignoring the great masterpieces of such artists as Phidias and Praxiteles, Raphael and Michel Angelo, Beethoven and Wagner, Dante and Shakespeare. To give us a natural religion without taking into consideration the profound experiences of the prophets, the psalmists, and Jesus is to cut one's self off from history, to refuse one's rich racial heritage, and instead of becoming original to become commonplace.

Moreover, these very values, inadequate as they are, are not sufficiently grounded in the nature of the ultimate reality to provide the essential elements of religion. They are primarily human values, produced and passed on by the race. In shifting the emphasis in revelation from the supernatural to the natural, and its method from the miraculous to the normal, and its basis from the ultimate reality to the native capacities of the soul, there has arisen the question whether these values are anything more than human? Do they have any other than a subjective basis? Are they grounded in the nature of ultimate reality?

Thus for many this diminishing of the content of revelation

has made religion impotent, and this positivizing of revelation has made religion impossible. If the content of revelation is not as rich as the deepest experience of the race and of the best soul in the race, then it is too poor for the soul's high demands today. And if the content of revelation does not express the nature of the ultimate reality and is not grounded therein, the soul remains in the phenomenal, bereft of its divine companion, and, however nobly it may strive to live its life, it falls short of the distinctively religious experience. Religion can live and be potent only when men have the deep experience and the firm conviction that they are in touch with ultimate reality. The deeps in man call to the deeps in the universe, and only as there is response, and this believed to be from God, is the soul satisfied.

We are still left with the problem of the right estimate and relation of the various aspects of experience. There can be no question now as to the necessity that the religious experience should fall in with the other experiences, that it must come to the mind in accordance with the normal functionings of its powers, and that its events in the world happen in accord with the ordered working of natural forces. If religion cannot come today in this way, if revelation is not by natural and normal methods, then there is little hope either for religious experience or for its claim on attention of serious-minded men.

On the other hand, religious experience means little or nothing if it is not a revelation of the ultimate reality. Through the other aspects of experience we are consciously related to the phenomenal order; through the religious experience we are consciously related to the noumenal order. Here is the fundamental truth for which the apologists were contending in their defence of the idea of revealed religion. Their interpretation of the truth, and their method of its establishment, and much else besides, we must abandon, and indeed have abandoned; not so, however, the truth for which they contended. This is still the basic truth in all deep thinking on ultimate things; it gives meaning, worth, and power to religion; and it needs accentuation today for the deepening life of the race. Much effort for a long time has been given to make our beliefs rational, and all this has been necessary

and salutary. The time has come, however, to give more time and thought to making our religion deep and spiritual, and this we can do through a higher appreciation of the reality of the revelation which created, and culminated in, the Christian religion.

Natural religion views man as searching for God, seeking where he might find him, reaching lame hands of faith and stumbling up the world's great altar-stairs. This is a noble conception. It does justice to one aspect of human experience. It is characteristic of much in our modern religious life and thought. There is, however, another view which grows out of a richer experience and gives a deeper insight into the meaning of religion. It is that of revelation. It is the experience of the disclosure of the divine reality in the human soul and the race. It is the experience of God seeking and finding man. It is the sense of the reality of the divine which becomes the most certain fact in life. The bearer of divine revelation is not, as Schultz has well said, in the first instance a philosopher who concludes from the data of experience and the wonder of the world that God is a reality; but rather he is a prophet who is conscious of the divine reality that has come into his life, stirred his soul, quickened his conscience, gripped his will; and this experience compels its proclamation. The philosopher moves toward God through the world and man; the prophet comes from God to the world and man. The one is in search for God; the other is found of God; the one longs for certitude, the other has it. It is from God that every prophet and founder of religion comes with his revelation.

This is the experience that gave rise to religion in the first place and has continued it until this day, and which has purified and deepened it in proportion to the growing insight into the meaning and power of the divine revelation. Some revelation there was of the divine from the very beginning. Something other than nature and deeper than the human disclosed itself. Crude indeed were the interpretations of these disclosures of the gods, bizarre the methods devised for the discovery of their wills, and low the level on which all these occurrences took place. Yet the experience of the revelation of the divine, the sense of its reality, the consciousness of its power, the realization of some-

thing mysterious seizing the soul and wrestling with it, lies back of all these ideas and makes the disclosure of the divine real and potent. And the religious progress of the race means an ever-deepening experience of the incoming of this divine reality into its life, an increasingly higher level of interests on which the divine and human meet, a constantly growing spiritualization of the media through which the divine comes, and a progressively larger interpretation of the meaning of this experience.

For the true interpretation of an experience we must have recourse to its best instance. This shows more clearly its real nature. This brings us to the place in the progress of revelation of the Christian religion. The divine revelation in the Christian religion is taken as the fullest disclosure of the nature of God on the ground that it is the converging-point in which the religions meet and find the fulfilment of their meaning, that in it the experience of the soul in fellowship with God satisfies all human needs and cravings, that its interpretation of God in the terms of divine fatherhood, and man in the terms of sonship, and the final end of life as a kingdom in which all men realize their nature, is alone adequate, and that the outlook it cherishes of the external world at once inspires and purifies. This does not mean that there is no revelation of God elsewhere; on the contrary, it presupposes that there is, and that this universal revelation becomes the more certain and significant through the divine revelation which culminates in the Christian religion. It is therefore with this religion that we are now concerned and from it we get our idea of the meaning of revelation. Only as we remain on this high level we shall rightly interpret the significance of the divine disclosure.

What then, we ask, is the nature of the divine revelation?

The answers given to this question on the lower levels of religious experience are manifestly inadequate. The interpretation of revelation in the terms of information by means of divination, soothsaying, prediction, or oracle-giving concerning the will of the god in petty matters, or his dangerous power, or ritual requirement, no longer avails us. Though on a somewhat higher moral level, yet not much more adequate is the interpretation of revelation in the terms of guidance in special situations or for the

establishing of an ecclesiastical institution. These interpretations have this in common: they refer both the content and the purpose of revelation to something which in the first instance concerns man rather than God; the revelation is conceived primarily for man rather than of God. Another idea of revelation is that it is information communicated by God about himself. This is the common view. It has been held by the church from the time of the Greek fathers. It has various forms. Some think revelation to be the attestation of the truth which men have thought out for themselves, in their philosophic endeavor to interpret the meaning of the world, man, and God. Others think it gives men knowledge of the truth about the world, man, and God which they cannot acquire by their own powers. It either restores the knowledge they once had but lost, or gives it for the first time. Still others think that it is the imparting of those distinctive truths of the Christian religion which concern our salvation. Theological doctrines are the content of revelation which we must think if we would know the truth, and must believe if we would be saved. This interpretation, in so far as it makes revelation refer primarily to the disclosure of God, is nearer the truth than the other. Its defect, however, lies in its notion of the content revealed. It is information about God rather than the manifestation of God himself. It gives knowledge about God rather than experience of God. The idea is too intellectualistic. It is conceived in the terms of knowledge,—either attested or restored or imparted; and the sole organ of revelation is the intellect. We are still kept at a distance from God; there is as yet no real divine self-revelation.

The only adequate idea of revelation is that which conceives it in the terms of self-manifestation.² This is the conception for which we are largely indebted to a succession of German thinkers: to Schleiermacher, who saw that religion was something deeper and more vital than the orthodox thinkers on the one side and the rationalists on the other had realized, and that at the very basis of religion was the fundamental fact of revelation; to Rothe, who turned the thought of his day from questions

²Ihmel, *Centralfragen der Dogmatik*, pp. 56 ff.

of inspiration of the Scriptures to the inspiration of men as the condition for the manifestation of God; to the Erlangen school, and to Frank in particular, who in the God revealed saw the redeemer of men, whose revelation therefore has redemption for its purpose and history for its great sphere; to Ritschl and his followers, for whom revelation culminates in the disclosure of God in Jesus, and has for its purpose the establishment of the Kingdom. For one and all of these theologians revelation is no longer the communication of knowledge but the manifestation of God and the impartation of his life. God himself is the content of the revelation.

These theologians have sent us back to the Scriptures, the great record and source-book of the experiences of men to whom this revelation of God came, and we find that the Biblical historian thinks first, last, and always of God in the events of the world; the prophet feels the presence and sees the power of God in social affairs and proclaims his message; the psalmist finds God in the depths of the inner life. In like manner, the New Testament shows us men to whom God is revealed; and the revelation is deeper and truer, for the God disclosed is greater and more loving. Thus in the divine revelation in Christian experience it is God himself who is unveiled. His life in the soul produces the experience that makes for the conviction of his reality and the knowledge of his character.

And this manifestation takes place in the soul. The ultimate reality registers itself in the human consciousness. Revelation is not in the outer realm, but in the inner through the outer. The mystic is right in his insistence that the soul is the dwelling place of God; that the mind of man is the candle of the Lord; that revelation is of spirit to spirit. There is no real revelation where the human spirit does not realize the presence, experience the power, and rejoice in the life of God within. It is when there is a reaction to the influence of God in the soul that revelation takes place. This is the reason why no ready-made knowledge of God can be imparted. The experience of the soul in touch with God in its contact with the world and in its participation in historic movements is the stuff out of which it elaborates its knowledge of spiritual realities and makes its interpretations. As sense-

experience has its knowledge-value when elaborated and transmuted, so has religious experience its knowledge-value when it is pondered on and interpreted. Revelation provides the experience and the soul makes the transmutation. The reality, however, in and through all these experiences and interpretations is God.

Now the experience of this revelation of God within the soul makes possible and more easy the discovery of God elsewhere. The light of God in the soul shines out also upon the world, and in his light we see light. This revelation of God is mediated in several ways. It comes through one or another aspect of the total reality. There is nothing in the vast universe which may not come trailing clouds of glory from God who is its home. There is nothing created by God which does not serve as his organ of expression and the means of his coming into contact with the soul of man.

Thus nature is a medium for the revelation of God. It is true that some go through nature to God, but it is more true that God comes through nature into the life of man. This is the point of view of religion. It is the experience and the conviction of religious persons that God comes in and through this wonderful world into the secret places of the soul. He reveals himself through those objects and forces which condition man's earthly life, and which manifest his beneficence and create in man the grateful heart; in the stars, which, as they go singing on their way, declare the glory of God and produce awe in the soul; in the vastness of the world, which discloses the infinite reach of his power and gives man the consciousness of the ever-present divine help; in its order, which proves his faithfulness and invites man to take the attitude of trust; in its purposiveness, which manifests his providence and assures man that his life is safe in the divine care and keeping.

In the great pages of the Bible, in the prophecies, the psalms, the apostolic letters, and above all in the teaching of Jesus there is the manifold expression of the experience that God thus comes into the life of man through nature. And the best literature of last century is replete with the same thought. As one sings,

“Earth’s crammed with heaven,
And every common bush afire with God.”

And yet this revelation in nature is inadequate. It raises problems which trouble us keenly today. There are many things in nature which we cannot understand, occurrences we cannot explain, methods used which we cannot justify, results produced which we cannot approve. And there are times when the world is to us only a vast machine. We do not see the Spirit in the wheels discerned by the prophet with which our spirits can meet, consequently for many a man today there is no converse with the divine, and religion has ceased to be, and the soul finds itself solitary, sad, and hopeless.

“Brief and powerless is man’s life; on him and all his race the slow sure doom falls pitiless and dark. Blind to good and evil, reckless of destruction, omnipotent matter rolls on its relentless way; for man, condemned today to lose his dearest, tomorrow himself to pass through the gate of darkness, it remains only to cherish, ere yet the blow falls, the lofty thoughts that ennoble his little day; disdaining the coward terrors of the slave of Fate, to worship at the shrine that his own hands have built; undismayed by the empire of chance, to preserve a mind free from the wanton tyranny that rules his outward life; proudly defiant of the resistless forces that tolerate, for a moment, his knowledge and his condemnation, to sustain alone, a weary but unyielding Atlas, the world that his own ideals have fashioned despite the trampling march of unconscious power.”³

Nature considered apart from man is an inadequate organ for the expression of the divine thought and an imperfect medium for the impartation of God’s life to the soul. Things are never the adequate means for the revelation of one mind to another; even at their best, when they are raised to a high level through artistic modification by man, they are still inadequate to the expression of his deepest life. Far more with the expression of the divine life and thought. It is only through something greater than things, however vast, complex, and ordered, that God can express his deeper thought and realize his greater purpose. If we remain

³B. Russell, *Philosophical Essays*, p. 70.

on the level of nature, we shall not receive the greater divine disclosures, and we shall always be exposed to those dark-shadowed experiences of doubt and despair. At its best, nature is but the flowing garment of God; we long, however, for the vision of the divine face, and this comes through other media.

It is in human life that we find the fuller expression of God's life. Through the person rather than the thing, however great, comes the deeper revelation of the nature of reality. In the coming of man there arrives a better medium for the divine disclosure. Here is a mind that can think and interpret the meaning of its life and penetrate into the secret recesses of the world, delight in its beauty and grandeur, enter into intimate relation of love and friendship with human beings, and know the joy of life in fellowship and service; find his vocation in subjugating the passions of the flesh in the interests of the higher nature, in developing the distinctively human powers, and building here on the earth the kingdom of heaven; and in and through all his moral tasks live in communion with the eternal Spirit.

It is just through such a personal medium as this that God enters more directly and completely into this human world. It is this personality with all its human experiences, with its love and moral passion, its high tasks and noble endeavors, its joys and sorrows, its suffering and sacrifice, its distress and peace, its sins and their forgiveness, its tragic defeats and great victories, which provides for God the greater medium through which he can reveal, far better than through nature, his moral character, and more fully impart his life. It is in these deeper experiences that God comes to the soul, makes his presence realized, his power felt, and his grace experienced. It is through these experiences that we come to realize the revelation of something greater than the world and deeper than human life.

And, on a greater scale, through the action and interaction of men and the world, in the sphere of history, God comes into human life. Revelation is not a matter of the individual life alone, in its depths and solitariness; it is also, and indeed far more, a great historic movement. It is in the sphere of history that the thoughts of men are tested and tried out; here love builds homes and links the successive generations; here men pro-

duce their great cultural values; here the consciences and wills of men clash in tragic conflict in decisive battles; here the soul's longing for the infinite and the eternal builds temples and cathedrals. In and through this great historic life there comes the larger and more certain revelation of God. The men of deeper insight in all ages have found the disclosure of the divine, not only in and through their inner lives, but also in and through social interests, noble institutions, great national events, and the historic process of the race in its upward movement to the far-off divine event to which the whole creation moves. This religious experience is long prior to the philosophic interpretation of history in the terms of teleology.

Now in our social world and in the movements of history there are certain persons through whom God comes into the life of the race in greater measure and with greater clearness than through others. He is best revealed through those persons who tower far above us in their moral majesty, whose hearts are full of devotion to the race, whose minds see deep into the spiritual realities of the universe, and whose souls dwell on the mount of vision in fellowship with the Eternal. Even the dull Israelites could not fail to see the divine glory on the face of Moses, and the prejudiced Saul could not be blind to the radiance of the angelic countenance of Stephen. The greater the soul and the richer its experiences, the clearer and the deeper is the manifestation of the ultimate moral reality and the more real has God become through them to others. Through the long line of the prophets, psalmists, apostles, saints, and founders of religions the great disclosure of the divine has most fully come. It has become more significant in meaning, richer in content, higher in worth, and more potent in influence, in proportion to the development of personality and the achievement of character. The greater the soul, the deeper disclosure of the divine. The difference in the meaning and worth of revelation is thus due to the difference in the persons through whom it came.

Since the deepest revelation always waits on the greater personality, the coming of Jesus provided God with the adequate medium for the consummate manifestation of his moral character and spiritual nature. The human race knows nothing, as

Ranke said, that can be brought into comparison with the moral greatness of Jesus. In the long line of great souls through whom the divine revelation has come, he stands alone on the highest pinnacle. He is the soul through which there has come to the human race the deepest revelation of the divine and the clearest vision of God. Without depreciating other personalities or minimizing the reality and the worth of the revelation through them, the Christian finds in Jesus the unique medium for the manifestation of God. For the Christian church there is no question concerning his moral greatness and the reality of the divine revelation through him. What differences there are in the interpretation of his significance for religion arise from the different understanding of what constitutes his uniqueness.

Some think this uniqueness consists in the miraculous manner in which he came into this world and the miraculous way in which by resurrection and ascension he returned to the eternal world. Since no one else ever had such an experience, this constitutes his uniqueness, and provides the major part of the content of his revelation, and establishes his truth and certainty. His revelation is a reporting of what he knew and remembered far more than of what he learned on the earth. Others find his uniqueness in his twofold nature, from the divine part of which came the divine revelation. Since it was like revealing like, there could be no question of its reality and worth. This interpretation moves in the right direction, since it seeks in experience the fact and the meaning of revelation.

Still others see his uniqueness in some philosophical idea which can be deduced from his character and then detached from the historic reality of his personality.⁴ They find the significance of Jesus in his having been the occasion for the rise in the consciousness of humanity of the idea of the God-man and in his serving the purpose of the identification of the idea and the person by the religious imagination, which always seeks such symbolic representation. Or they see his significance in serving as the "Christ-principle," a principle which is true not simply in Jesus but in reality only as the idea of Christianity itself, which maintains the essential unity of the infinite and the finite

⁴See Faut, *Die Christologie seit Schleiermacher*.

spirit. Jesus is the bearer of the principle and the guarantor of its realization in others.

In kinship of thought, though not in ecclesiastical affiliation, we find another group who trace their origin through the mystical succession back to the Pauline christology, and find the real significance of Jesus as the bearer of revelation not in his historical career and his achievement of character and his production of moral values on the earth, but rather in his exalted state and mystical relation with men today. What meaning, however, can be given to the mystical Christ apart from his historical reality, it is difficult to see. The tendency of all these interpretations is to lose sure footing on the earth and to get out of close touch with historic reality. To avoid this, we are forced back from the skies to the earth, from the mystical to the historical, that we may get our conception of the significance of his life as the revelation of God. It may be that here, too, as in the ancient legend contact with the earth will give strength, touch with historical fact bring greater meaning and power.

It is therefore in the historical Jesus that we find the supreme revelation of God. He stood rooted in his nation. He was conditioned by his people. He was nourished by its great literature. He felt its deeper currents pass through his own life; he knew himself as in the mighty succession of the prophets; he saw the great movement converging upon him; he penetrated into the inner reality of its hopes and expectations, and felt that they were realized in him. Much that he thought and lived, in its essential greatness and also in its transient form, he derived from the history of his race and from his own day and generation. Deeper, however, than both these sources was his own inner experience in contact with God, living his own life, thinking his own thoughts, feeling deeply the great movement of his own heart, taking his own direct attitude towards moral reality and living his own inner life of fellowship with God. The deepest thing in his life was his consciousness of God. His vision was clear; his insight penetrating; his spiritual certitude immovable; his communion unbroken. This religious experience was the controlling factor in his life. It made him what he was; it gave him his message; it made his moral consciousness function with sympathetic ap-

preciation and with inevitable unerringness. It kept him in touch with all sorts of men; it gave him his consuming passion for men; it sent him on his redemptive mission; it kept him true to his vocation; it led him to the cross.

It is in and through these great experiences of Jesus that there was given to the world the deepest revelation of God. It was through this spirit that the eternal Spirit disclosed its deepest depths; through this mind, the everlasting truths of life; through this moral consciousness, the nature of the ultimate reality; through this moral passion for man's redemption, the revelation of his supreme interest and his forgiving love for the race. The life of Jesus spells for us the character of God.

The purpose of this divine revelation is the creation of the Christian religion. It is to bring the divine and the human spirit into fellowship. The manifestation of the one spirit to the other is that they may both live together. The great purpose of God, as far as we can read it in revelation, is the establishment of right relations between him and the soul, and of all that this involves in the other relations of life. It means the fellowship of thought between the two minds in their common interest in truth; the fellowship of love between the two hearts for all holy things; and the fellowship of work between the two wills in the realization of divine ends.

The divine spirit is not, however, to be conceived as an isolated reality. The God with whom we have to do, and with whom we are to be in right relations, is not the God of the soul alone but also the God of the world and humanity, of time and eternity. To be in fellowship with God means to find him in his world, with all its forces and in all its laws; and to live in harmony with them and in obedience to them. It means, also, that we must find God in all souls, and serve him in and through them, and serve them by working for the realization of God's purposes for their lives. It follows then that we are to have fellowship with the God of contemporaneity; to find him in our day and generation, in this flux of things, in this seething stream of the world. But while "modernity is good, eternity is better," and the God of eternity, mirrored in the glassy sea of heaven, must be the supreme concern of life and thought. Revelation

is thus for fellowship, and in this fellowship religion is perfected.

But the realization of this sublime purpose of the divine revelation involves redemption. If religion is the end of revelation, redemption is man's great need and God's sure means for its realization. Through his spiritual ignorance man is blind to his true life. He does not know wherein he is to find the satisfaction of his soul; he thinks that things are the great values; he grasps at the tangible; he seeks for the material; he lives and moves in the phenomenal; he experiences an arrest of his soul's ascent; he does not go beyond the world or man in his search for the ultimate, wherein alone he can find his true and enduring satisfactions. The world, and certain aspects of human life which should be transparent media through which he could see the ultimate realities of life, are opaque and he remains with them. And while afflicted with spiritual blindness he is also in moral bondage. His passions bind him; his appetites drive him; his ambitions make him cruel; his selfishness makes him indifferent; and his egotism makes him godless. The person he was meant to be and can be, he is not, because of the stunting effects of his sin. There are powers in him which do not have the opportunity for development, since the life he lives is not in accord with his true nature.

The purpose of revelation, interpreted in the terms of the Christian religion, is realized in the redemption effected by Jesus through his moral greatness and spiritual power. Men and women came to a new sense of God through him. When they were in his presence and had insight into his moral greatness, they became conscious that they were also in the presence of God. Contact with this greatest moral reality of their human world made them realize the ultimate moral reality. Their own consciousness of God became clear, keen, certain, and controlling; and two different kinds of experience resulted. On the one hand they had a profound sense of the moral character of God and a deep conviction of their sin. No one was ever as sympathetic with sinners as Jesus, but no sinner ever confused the moral issues of life in his presence and in his relation to the God of whom he made men conscious. Moral confusion, no less

than intellectual perplexity, has often resulted from theological doctrines of the atonement; but neither the one nor the other befell the men who realized the august moral realities of life through Christ. They experienced a new conviction of sin, a new consciousness of guilt, and the absolute need for a moral change of life. The moral despair, however, which often results from this new experience was not theirs. They had the assurance of forgiveness. Terrible as was the righteousness of God seen and felt through the life of Jesus in its judgment on sin, yet these men felt that, in and through Jesus, God was seeking them and finding them. It was not so much his teaching that assured them, nor the promises he made them, rather it was his life of redeeming, forgiving love that convinced them, and in this they found absolution for their sin. Their consciences might condemn them, but Christ was greater than their consciences, and his attitude towards them made them realize the forgiveness of God.

This forgiveness, however, is for fellowship. It culminates in communion. Forgiveness of the past which does not restore personal relations is of no avail. The returning prodigal is received into filial fellowship. The father and the son are once more in loving relation. It is in this fellowship, intimate, deep, and comprehensive, that the divine revelation finds its purpose realized, and the Christian religion is established in power and permanence. It is in this fellowship that the redeemed soul finds the growth of its nature, and the release of its powers which make its life a larger reality, its experience more significant and worthwhile, and the dynamic for the undaunted and victorious struggle with the world, its suffering, sorrow, and death.

These great redemptive experiences which culminate in communion with God and the moral life triumphant over the world have been reproduced in the lives of men in all the centuries since Jesus' time. Through the record of his life and insight into its meaning they have come into a relation with God like his. As one is brought face to face with the beautiful in the contemplation of some great painting, with truth through the thought of some great thinker, so also, though in a deeper way,

are we brought face to face with God through this great soul. In and through this life the consciousness is produced that we are in right relation with the ultimate moral reality. Through this historical Jesus we find the eternal God, and are at home in worlds hitherto unrealized. While the revelation is thoroughly historical, it is more. It is personal; it is continuous; it is contemporaneous. The distance between our country and Palestine is overcome; the centuries are annulled; the God and Father of our Lord Jesus is disclosed to us here and now; and we interpret the God whom we find today in our souls and in the world and in advancing humanity, in the terms of the truth of the mind of Jesus, the love of his heart, and the purpose of his life.

This divine revelation which created the Christian religion and culminated in it is the only adequate disclosure of God which we possess. The Christian religion cherishes the conviction that there is no different or greater revelation to come than that which has been made in and through Jesus. Theologians have given expression to this conviction in their interpretation of this religion in the terms of its truth, or finality, or absoluteness. By these terms they have meant that in the truth of the Christian religion we have the real expression of the mind of God; in its finality we have the goal of the religious movement of humanity; in its absoluteness we have the realization of the deepest nature of man and the disclosure of the ultimate depths of the life of God.

This religious conviction, on the one hand, and its theological interpretation, on the other, are confronted today by objections which arise from other ideas and reveal other attitudes of mind. To speak of any finality today is to be met at once with the reply that nothing has reached its end, that every thing is evolving, that the universe itself is still in the process of creative evolution. And to speak of any thing absolute is to be met with the assertion of the relativity of all life and ideas, and even of the forms of thought and moral principles. Our life is so deeply involved in the phenomenal, the historical, the relative, that we find it hard to transfer our minds to the point of view of the superhistorical, the absolute, the ultimate. And yet it is just in

this region that religion lives and moves and has the secret of its being.

There can, however, be no question about the claim of finality on the part of the Christian religion. The evidence of this claim is clear enough. The movement of the historic process through which God reveals himself has as its objective the coming of Christ, and finds in him its culmination, since he was the realization of its mighty hopes and the fulfilment of its sublime aspirations for uninterrupted fellowship with God and for the establishing of his reign in the hearts of men and in the affairs of the world. Far more significant, however, is Christ's own consciousness and conviction on this matter. He interprets his life as the fulfilment of prophecy, regards himself as the Messiah than whom none other is to be expected, declares that he alone knows the Father intimately, adequately, and truly; and that his great mission to the world is to be the bearer of this revelation.

And the experience and conviction of the first Christians have borne witness to the same claim. They saw in Jesus the Christ of God, they found in him the revealer, they experienced through him their redemption and their personal fellowship with God. From this experience they conceived Christ as the one in whose name all nations were to be baptized; the cosmic process itself had come to its culmination, and they expected all the future progress of the race to be the deeper realization in life and thought of this revelation of God in him.

It is well for us to mark the limitation of the idea of the finality of revelation. It is not meant to cover the field of science, nor the sphere of philosophy, nor in large measure the region of history. The man of science has not yet come to his final conclusions concerning the nature of the forces he studies and the formulæ of their action. Nor has the philosopher given us the final interpretation of the meaning of the world, man, and the ultimate reality in their relation one with another. And certainly the historian must wait on events yet to occur before he can give us the meaning of the historic process even of our own day. Non-finality in all these aspects of reality characterizes our effort. It is this fact which keeps open for these students the great realms of the world for their study and makes us eager for their

discoveries and interpretations. In all these extensive regions of knowledge we are far from any finality or absoluteness in our knowledge. Consequently, any claim made by the theologian in the name of the Christian religion to the final interpretation of things in these spheres is not justified by the facts, or by the nature of the divine revelation. To make this claim for things which belong to the discredited and discarded world-view of the Bible is to endanger the spiritual reality which must be central in our thought. The idea of finality is something which concerns not the framework of things but the nature and character and purpose of God. Revelation is the disclosure of God. It is the manifestation of his deepest nature, his absolute moral character, his final purpose in the establishment of his kingdom in the world. In the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ we have the self-disclosure of the Spirit of which all truth is the expression, all beauty is the manifestation, and all love the embodiment. A higher term for our thought of God than christlike we do not possess. Not only do we baptize nature in the name of Christ but we baptize our idea of God in the same name. For us the ultimate reality is christlike. At the heart of all things there beats the loving heart of God. And in our fellowship with God we have the experience which for the soul is final. Not that the soul has entered into it completely, nor that it understands it adequately, but that in this experience the ultimate is reached, and nothing in God, or in the soul itself, is to make it a passing phenomenon. The right way is taken for the complete communion of perfect fellowship. Growth into Christ's experience takes us ever deeper into our fellowship with God on all the great moral and spiritual interests of life. Religious experience apart from Christ impoverishes our lives and leaves us uncertain of the nature and purpose of the ultimate spiritual reality. And we find in the spirit of Jesus in every critical situation and in all human relations the perfection of the will in its moral attitudes. To have the mind of Jesus is therefore to see into the moral depths of life, to be in right relations with all persons, and to make the affairs and interests of the world subserve social welfare. Personal moral progress is made in and through the realization of Christ's type of life, and the welfare of society

is secured through fidelity to his moral principles and social attitude.

This suggests our final consideration. In the divine revelation and the Christian religion Jesus has a permanent place. By some it is held that the divine revelation may indeed have been given through Jesus as through no one else, but that now that others know it, he is no longer essential to it. Once the great truths of life are made known and are capable of being thought by others, the person who first thought and expressed them may be wholly set aside or forgotten. No one need think of Euclid in working out present problems in geometry, or of Archimedes in dealing with problems in mechanics. How little did Buddha care for his fate at the hands of the universe or even in the memory of his disciples! Mahomet thought little of his person in view of the greatness of his bequest of the law to the people.

All this is perfectly true, and if the Christian religion were only a set of truths or a group of laws the same would be true of it. But since it is primarily a life in fellowship with God, the case is different, for it is in and through the life of Jesus that we know God best and are brought into fellowship with him. If revelation were not primarily of God but were only *for* man, we could dispense with Jesus, but since it is of God, and this in and through the life of Jesus, we are compelled to recognize his personal place in the Christian religion and his abiding significance for the soul of man. As Troeltsch says in his address before the Liberal Congress of Religion in Berlin:

There is . . . also the fact that there is no other means of holding the Christian community together than that of acknowledging Jesus; that it is impossible to keep alive the peculiarly Christian idea of God without seeing in Jesus the life-giving embodiment of him; that all the more important and characteristic ideas of Christianity, grace which enters into and possesses us, that sense of security which is offered us, that strength which elevates and subdues us, depend on a religious estimation and interpretation of Jesus as the revelation of God. To sever the Christian belief in God in every sense from the person of Jesus would mean cutting away this belief from its roots in the past, from methods which have been employed to represent and contemplate it, from all the greatness which so immeasurably surpasses that of the average of man,—ultimately in fact destroying the belief itself. . . . Jesus is the embodiment

of the transcendent power, ever illuminated afresh through the centuries, whose pulse beats through the whole of Christendom, just as the vibrations of a ship's engines are felt in every part and corner of the vessel. For this reason he will always remain a living force wherever the Christian prophetic faith in God abides; and the belief in him will, only by looking upwards to such a personality, raise itself to full power and security over the common weakness and poverty of mankind. If this is the case, then the image of Jesus will remain inseparable from all efficacious Christian belief in God.

The passing centuries, instead of removing us further from Christ and making him less significant, serve more and more to show his real greatness and his permanent worth for the race. It has been said that it is the fate of great thinkers to be obliged to make and wait for the coming of men who can understand them. This is still more true in the region of the moral and spiritual life. Christ must produce Christians in order to be fully understood; and the more Christian the race becomes, the more deeply will it penetrate into the meaning of his life, and the more truly appreciate the grandeur of his soul, and in and through it find God and have fellowship with him. The traveller in the valley of Chamounix is deeply impressed with the towering greatness of Mt. Blanc; but it is only when he climbs Mt. Brevent, which lies opposite, that he truly sees how far Mt. Blanc towers above the surrounding peaks and how majestic is its snow-capped dome. The race, through the passing centuries, will climb to ever-greater heights, but these heights will only serve as a vantage-ground to show how divine is the soul of the Master in and through whom God comes to men; in him they will see the Father and it will suffice them.